

Reading the 1897 Census

Russia “How to” Guide, Intermediate Level: Instruction

November 2020

GOAL

This guide will teach you how to read an 1897 Russian Empire Census record for your ancestor.

INTRODUCTION

The 1897 Russian Imperial Census was the first and only census carried out in the Russian Empire. The census enumerated the entire population of the Empire (excluding Finland), but after statistical data was gathered, many of the census returns were destroyed. Use sites such as [The Archival Fonds of the First Russian Empire Census of 1897](#) and the [Metric's Inventory of the 1897 Census](#) To determine if original census returns exist for your ancestor's area. Original census returns are written in Russian, although you may come across documents written in other languages common in the Russian Empire.

As the documents are in Russian, you may want to consult the following “How to” Guides before continuing:

- [The Russian Alphabet](#)
- [Deciphering the Handwriting and Understanding the Grammar](#)

HOW TO

The census consists of three main types of forms – A (A) for peasant farms, Б (B) for private farms, and В (V) for urban dwellers. Each variation consists of a cover page listing information about the location and the number of individuals within the household. Examples of forms can be found on the [Russia Census](#) page on the FamilySearch Wiki.

CENSUS RETURNS

Regardless of which form is used, the census questionnaire for each household looks the same. Below you will find translations of the column headings. Note that each column has a number above it. Find that number in this “How to” Guide to learn more about each column and find examples from real documents of vocabulary and information commonly found in each column. Keep in mind that this guide is not a comprehensive list of all of the possible vocabulary you may encounter in a census return. For additional vocabulary commonly found in genealogical documents, please see the [Russian Genealogical Word List](#).

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
ФАМИЛИЯ (прозвище), ИМЯ и ОТЧЕСТВО или ИМЕНА, если ихъ нѣсколько. Отмѣтка о тѣхъ, кто окажется: слѣпымъ на оба глаза, нѣмымъ, глухонѣмымъ или умалишеннымъ.	Полъ. М-муж-ской. Ж-жен-ский.	Какъ записанный при-ходится главѣ хозяй-ства и главѣ своей семьи?	Сколько минуло лѣтъ или мѣ-сяцевъ отъ роду?	Холостъ, женатъ, вдовъ или раз-веденъ.	Состояніе, со-стояніе или за-нѣ.	Здѣсь-ли родился, а если не здѣсь, то гдѣ именно? (Губернія, уѣздъ, городъ).	Здѣсь-ли приписанъ, а если не здѣсь, то гдѣ именно? (для лицъ, обязанныхъ припискою).
Surname (alias), given name and patronymic, or other names if there are several. Notations about those who are blind in both eyes, dumb, deaf, or insane.	Sex M F	Relationship to the head of household.	Age in years or months.	Single, married, widowed, or divorced.	Social standing, condition, or rank.	If born here, and if not, where exactly? (gubernia, uyezd, city).	If registered here, and if not, where exactly? (for persons liable to the registrar).

9	10	11	12	13		14	
Гдѣ обыкновенно проживаетъ: здѣсь-ли, а если не здѣсь, то гдѣ именно? (Губер., уѣздъ, городъ).	Отмѣтка объ отсутствіи, отлучкѣ и о временномъ здѣсь пребыва-ніи.	Вѣроиспо-вѣданіе.	Родной языкъ.	Грамотность.		Занятіе, ремесло, промыселъ, должность или служба.	
				а.	б.	а.	б.
				Умѣетъ-ли читать?	Гдѣ обучается, обучался или кончилъ курсъ образованія?	Главное, то есть то, которое доставляетъ главныя средства для существованія.	1. Побочное или вспомогательное. 2. Положеніе по воинской повинности.
Usual place of residence, if not here, then where exactly? (gubernia, uyezd, city).	Note about absence or temporary stay.	Religion.	Native Language.	Literacy.		Occupation, craft, trade, position or service.	
				а.	б.	а.	б.
				Ability to read.	Where currently study, studied or finished a course of education.	Primary occupation which provides the main means of subsistence.	1. Collateral or auxiliary. 2. Position in military service.

1. Names

This column records the surname, given name, and patronymic (often in that order). For more information about deciphering names, please [see this handout](#). This column also records data about those who are blind, unable to speak, deaf, or insane. The census taker may record whether the condition has existed since birth, or at what age it began.

Russian	English
слепой; слепая на оба глаза	blind; blind in both eyes
немой немая	unable to speak

Russian	English
глухой глухонемая	deaf
умалишенный умалишенная	insane

2. Sex

Census takers typically used abbreviations to record gender:

Russian	English	Handwritten Examples
М (мужской)	M (male)	<i>М. м. М.</i>
Ж (женской)	F (female)	<i>ж. ж. ж.</i>

3. Relationship to Head of Household

Russian	English	Handwritten Examples
хоз. хозяин	male head of household	<i>хозяин хоз</i>
хоз. хозяйка	female head of household	<i>хозяйка хоз</i>
жена	wife	<i>жена жена</i>
сын	son	<i>сын сын</i>

Russian	English	Handwritten Examples
		<i>двор двор</i>

дочь	daughter	Дочь дочь
сноха невестка	daughter- in-law	невестка Невестка, Сноха Сноха Сноха
отец	father	Отец отец отец отец
мать	mother	Мать Мать мать. Мать
внук внучек	grandson	Внук, внук внук внучек
внучка	grand daughter	внучка внучка внучка Внучка
брат	brother	Брат <u>Брат</u> Брат
сестра	sister	Сестра <u>сестра</u> сестра сестра

Census takers often specify relationships not only to the head of household, but to other members of the household. This is done by stating a relationship word such as those found in the table above, and then

1	Каванов. Александр Иванович.	М.	Хорошо
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3	Каванов. Александр Иванович.	М.	Сын
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10	Каванов. Александр Иванович.	М.	бывш. с/з. Финд. 3.
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For additional relationship vocabulary not contained in this list, please see the [Russian Genealogical Word List](#).

4. Age

The age in years is recorded in this column. In some cases, particularly with small children, the age in years and/or months is recorded.

Russian	English	Handwritten Examples
М. МЦ. (месяцев)	month	

5. Marital Status

The fifth column records the marital status, often using abbreviations.

Russian	English	Handwritten Examples
ж. (женатый)	married male	
Russian	English	Handwritten Examples

з. (замужем)	married female	
вд. вдов. (вдовец/ вдовца)	widow/er	вд. вдов. вц. вц.
х. хол. (холостяк)	single male	х. хол. х. хол. х.
д. дев. (девица)	single female	д. дев. д. д.
р. раз. (разведен)	divorced	Because of the difficulty of obtaining a divorce in the Russian Empire, it's very rare to see <i>divorced</i> as an individual's marital status.

6. Social Standing

Column six lists the social standing. There were a variety of different social classes in the Russian Empire. For additional social classes, or variations on the social classes in this list, please see the [Russian Genealogical Word List](#).

Russian	English	Handwritten Examples
кр. крест. крест. гос. крест. госуд. крестьянин (m.) крестьянка (f.) из государственный	state peasant	крест. крест. гос. крест. крест. крест. гос. крест. крест. госуд. крест. крест. крест. крест. крест. крест. крест.

Russian	English	Handwritten Examples
мещ.	bourgeoisie	мещанка мещанка

мещанин (m.) мещанка (f.)	(city dwellers)	мещанин мещанка
куп. купец (m.)	merchant	купец купчиха
двор. дворянин (m.) дворянка (f.)	nobility	дворянин дворянка

- 7. Birthplace
- 8. Registration Place
- 9. Residence Place

Columns seven through nine record the birthplace, registration place, and residence place. These columns typically record the gubernia/oblast (province), uyezd/okrug (county), and city of birth. Place names in this column are typically found in genitive case. Use a gazetteer to help you determine the proper spelling of the location.

A common word found in these columns is *здесь*, or *here*, implying that the person was born, registered or resided in the place of the census enumeration.

Russian	English	Handwritten Examples
здесь	here	Здесь здесь здесь
губ. губер. губерния	gubernia (province)	губернии губер. губ. губ. губ.
об. обл. область	oblast (province)	обла. обл. обл.

у. уез. уезд	uезд (county)	уезд. уезд. уезд
ок. окр. округ	okrug (county)	окр. окр. окр.
в. вол. волость	volost (township)	в. вол. вол.
г. гор. город	city	город. город. город.
д. дер. деревня	village	дер. дер. дер.
с. село	village	с. село село

10. Mark of Absence or Temporary Stay

This column records an absence or temporary stay of an individual. Use the [Russian Genealogical Word List](#) to help you decipher words found in this column.

11. Religion

This column records religion, which when combined with the birth and registration place, is important for locating religious records. Below are some of the most common religions found in the Russian Empire. For additional religions, see the [Russian Genealogical Word List](#).

Russian	English	Handwritten Examples
Пр. Прав. Православный	Russian Orthodox	<i>прав. Пр. православ</i>
Иуд. Иудей, Иудейский	Jew, Jewish	<i>Иуд. Иудейский Иуд.</i>
Лют.	Lutheran	<i>лют. лютер лют лютин</i>
Р. Кат. Римско - Католического	Roman Catholic	<i>Р. кат. Рим- Р. Кат Римско Католического</i>

12. Native Language

The twelfth column lists the native language. Below are some of the most common languages found in the Russian Empire. For additional languages, see the [Russian Genealogical Word List](#).

Russian	English	Handwritten Examples
Р. Рус. (Русский)	Russian	<i>Р. рус. Р. Русин</i>
Евр. (Еврейский)	Yiddish	<i>Евр. Еврейский евр</i>

Russian	English	Handwritten Examples
Н. Нем. (Немецкий)	German	<i>Н. нем. Н. нем.</i>
		<i>лат. латинский лат.</i>

Лат. (Латвийский/ Латышский)	Latvian	
Пол. Польск. (Польский)	Polish	Поль-польск Поль скин

13. Literacy

This column is split into two sub-sections, the ability to read (yes or no), and place of education. A common word found in this column is *дома*, which suggests education took place at home.

a. Ability to read

Russian	English	Handwritten Examples
да	yes	да да да
нет(ъ)	no	нетъ нетъ нетъ Н.

b. Place of Education

Russian	English	Handwritten Examples
дома	at home	дома дома дома

14. Occupation

This column is divided into two sections:

a. Primary Occupation

b. 1. Collateral (other means of income); 2. Military

See the FamilySearch Wiki [Russian Genealogical Word List](#) for a list of common occupation and military terms.

ACTIVITY

Now, test your skills you have learned in this “How to” Guide. The Activity is a way to check your knowledge and let you know you’ve mastered the Guide! Click [here](#) to try out the Activity.

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